DON BLUTH'S TOON TALK

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Walt Disney The Visionary

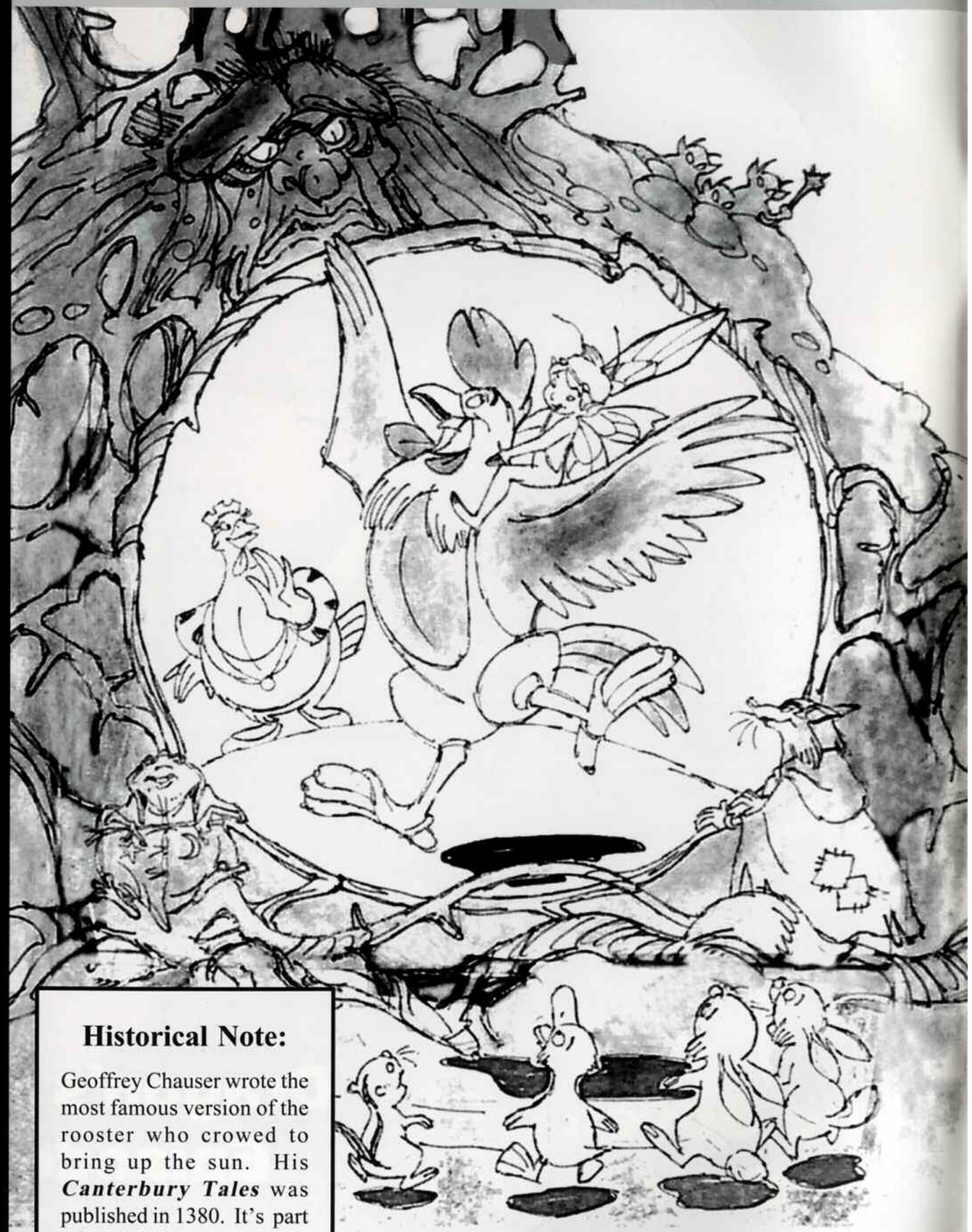
The Seven Yardsticks Of Animation

Dragon's Lair Episode VII

$5.95

REVIEW

Chanticleer



Historical Note:

Geoffrey Chauser wrote the most famous version of the rooster who crowed to bring up the sun. His ***Canterbury Tales*** was published in 1380. It's part of english literature.

ROCK-A-DOODLE

A Chick Flick

With "All Dogs" rounding the bend to the finish line, it was once again time to chase the next project. It always starts with doodles: I had been at it for about a week when one afternoon I felt someone was standing behind me, watching. I turned. There was Tony wearing a wrinkled brow. "Don, are you sure you can do a movie about a chicken?" "Chickens are not held in the highest esteem you know, not unless they're on the menu, and even then, it's dicey. Pheasant, Crab, Lobster, Eel, Salmon, Sole, Swordfish, Shark, Veal, or Filet mignon all have better ratings. Any of the above is accepted fare for the poets, the magistrates or the Kings. Chicken however, is peasant food." "Good, I make movies for the ordinary folk." I returned. You know Don, even in literature, I can't think of a single heroic chicken. Can you?" "Foghorn Leghorn," "Doesn't count," he's a gag cartoon."

"How about Chicken little?" "You're kidding, he was a hysterical idiot."

"Chanticleer?"

"A fool with scrambled eggs for brains. How could he think that it's his crowing that makes the sun come up in the morning? He's a loser."

"Well there are a lot of people out there walking around with that same notion in their heads. Are they losers?"

"They're misguided. God love 'em."

"Well Tony, I hope you're wrong. Anyway, a misguided hero is just the right stuff for making a movie, don't you think? Furthermore, when first Edmonde Rostand triumphed critically and financially with Cerano De Bergerac, and the public accolades kept coming in, He began work on a second play, which he mounted in

Paris, then invited high society to attend. It was the subject of polite conversation amongst the elite. From New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and all the great affluent cities of the world they came sailing, at great expense, to attend the play, this much anticipated historic event of Chanticleer".

"You do know, said Tony, that Disney had the rooster story in development for a few years, but shelved it because of the chicken-on-the-menu factor"

"I do, I replied, hopefully we'll find a new spin on it."

Here on this page you see some of the first conceptual sketches before the right spin came along, and Chanticleer eased away from being a crowing rooster, in fact gave it up entirely to become a singing bird who's golden voice captures the fancy of the barnyard and indeed the world, a la Elvis Presley. The protagonist shifted from Chanticleer to an eight year old, named Edmund,(Willie D) the younger of two boys on a Midwestern farm, who with his parents and older brother battle a flood from torrential rains that threatened their lives. The villain, an owl who loves the dark, (Christopher Plumber) convinces Chanticleer he has a singing career in the city. When he leaves, the sun no longer rises, and thus, the stormy weather. Edmund and Patou the dog (Phil Harris), Snipes, the excitable magpie (Eddie Deezon), and Tina, the brainiac mouse, (Sandee Duncan) sent out on a mission to bring Chanticleer (Glen Campbell) back home to crow once again, and dispel the stormy clouds.

To push the envelope out even further, we decided to bookend the picture with two live action segments. The family, the flood and the mud would be shot on one of the stages at Ardmore Studios in Bray, county Dublin while the journey and rescue of "Chanty" was obviously fantasy and best told in animation. Although combination live action/animation films have been around for a long time, this was a bold new step for our studio. Little did we know that waiting just out of sight, was a hungry merciless money pit capable of killing the picture, and maybe even closing the shop. What's the old adage? "Fools rush in…"

THE COLORS OF ROCK-A-DOODLE

Chanticleer, king of the barnyard, is reveered for his crow. It brings up the sun.

The Duke hates the sunlight and plots the destruction of the proud rooster.

A boy named Edmund tries to stop the Duke and discovers he has been changed into a cat.

The farm animals are swept away by the flood. Unless Chanticleer returns, they are doomed.

Snipes, Patou, Peepers, and Edmund the cat, go to the city to bring Chanticleer home.

Colonel Pinky instructs Goldie to keep Chanticleer hidden from his friends.

Chanticleer has become a rock star whose voice has made Colonel Pinky rich.

Finally, Patou, Snipes, and Edmund locate the rooster in the lavish Penguin niteclub.

But Chanticleer is lost in a romantic fog created by Goldie.

Peepers the mouse saves the day. Chanticleer is flown back to the country in a helicopter.

Peepers and Edmund drive Chanty home in Pinky's Pink Cadillac.

The Duke is defeated, Chanticleer crows,the floods subside, and Edmund becomes a boy.

Two Million Dollar Mudpie

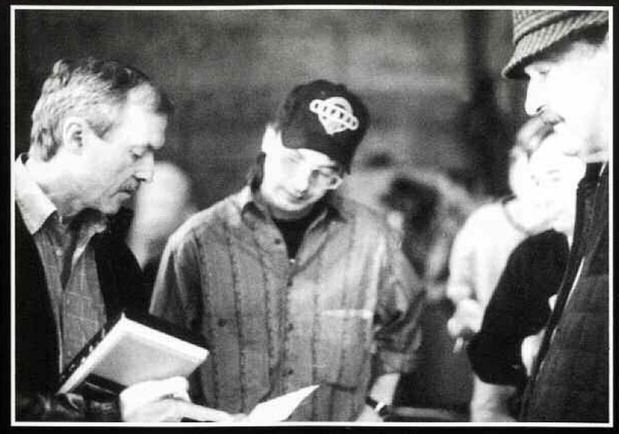
My guardian Freddy, is a jokester, I'm convinced of it. He may wear the angel blazer and badge; and yes, he may even be a legitimate ordainee, but he has a sense of humor leaning slightly towards the bizarre. Do I question his motives? Absolutely not, but his methodology is transcendent madness. See what you think of the slice of the kismet pie.

Michael Landon of *Little House On the Prairie fame,* and also *Highway to Heaven*, collaborated with an actor/friend of his on both shows, a guy named Victor French. In case you've forgotten, he was the one with the black beard. Anyway, we hired Victor to come to Dublin for two weeks to direct the live action bookends to Rock-a-Doodle. No big deal. I spoke with Victor several times on the phone, and he was perfect for the assignment. The only hitch was he had to wrap in two weeks since he had another gig scheduled back in Los Angeles. "No problem", I reassured him. "We've hired a super efficient live action crew from both London and Dublin." "Well, there you have it, " he laughed. "Don't worry about a thing. You take care of the animation, I'll make you proud in live action."

The construction crew at Ardmore had finished building the farmhouse set, and the twenty tons of dirt had been hauled onto the stage. The set was dressed with trees, patches of grass, and a smattering of twigs and rocks, but most impressive was the $400,000 sprinkling system installed in the ceiling, electronically wired to a control panel, and a gigantic water pump. The sequence you see, called for a torrent of rain and to that end we had directed our attention for weeks, and at no small expense. The very idea of creating rain in the land of rain was irony at its best. But in Victor's two-week window, we needed a "lash of it", or should I say a monsoon that could perform on cue.

The budget for sets, FX, costumes, crew, actors and director was carved in stone, two million dollars, no more, and the schedule, two weeks, no more. We made lists, however remote, of all the possible screw-ups. We checked the equipment with no less diligence than the scientists gave before any launch at Cape Canaveral, then waited. The countdown began.

Victor, with his broad faced smile and infectious enthusiasm stepped onto our cold, damp set on March 14, 1989. Winter in Dublin can be nasty, but the climate there on stage was brutal. The mud was cold. He rubbed his hands together vigorously and blew on his fingers. I could see his breath. "I think I've forgotten something," he muttered, "my long



Don Bluth, Dan Kuenster, and Victor French confer on the set of Rock-A-Doodle.

johns." "You'll have a pair by morning," I added. "I'm just glad you're here."

At last I could breath easily. Shooting began. Victor was in his element, even knee deep in mud, he seemed buoyant, indefatigable, and eager to please. So I returned to the board to supervise animation, totally unaware of a tiny ticking bomb that was set to detonate just hours away; I'm speaking figuratively of course. It's a metaphor for making rumble out of order. By the fourth day Victor had shot most of the storm sequences, and the cow, poor thing, had been tranquilized, lead onto the stage, and buried up to her ribs in mud for the "rescue-old-Betsy" moment. I was worried about the shot. The script called for the gentle creature to be pulled out of the mud with the family pick-up truck. I was half expecting a call telling me they killed the beast, either by drowning her, or snapping her neck. This was one shot I didn't want to watch. So when the phone rang, my heart skipped a beat. I picked it up. "I hope you're not about to wreck my life. How's the cow?" I asked. "Fine, she's content for now, but Victor has developed some back pains, probably from the Blue Angel flight he and Michael Landon took last week. Just to be on the safe side, we're taking him over to Blackrock Clinic to have it checked out." Click! "Yes", I thought to myself, you do that. The Blackrock Clinic is superb, but the name: They should do something about

that name. There's not much comfort in "black". In fact, my gut told me that "black" was prognosticating the outcome, and the news would be grim indeed. Twenty-four hours later, the other shoe dropped. Victor's little backache turned out to be cancer. The clinic recommended he go home and put his affairs in order. They gave him six weeks tops. Victor was on his own highway to heaven. Saying goodbye to him at the airport was miserable. His conversation was light and trivial, mine insipid. At the gate he apologized for leaving, hugged me, and then he walked away, never looking back, and vanished into the airplane. I strolled back to my car, troubled by the sadness of the outcome, and wondering why the fates had brought Victor so far from home to deliver the bad news.

Meanwhile, the live action shooting had stopped, but the rent on the stage, the salaries of the cast and crew had not. We were burning money at the rate of $200,000 per day, not good. To hire another director would take weeks. Caught between a rock and a hard place, I showed up on the set the next morning to say to the cast and crew, "well guys, it looks like I'm it, I'm your director." After a polite applause, Bob, the cameraman pulled me aside and asked, "have you ever done this before?" "No." I said, but I know what needs to go onto the screen. "Good", he replied. "The rest is mechanics." Suddenly the crew huddled around me and I got a crash course in the director's jargon, buzzwords, and process. My confidence was rising; I knew I could do it. "So what's the next shot", I asked Martin my new assistant. He pointed to a grip that was leading Abigail the cow into the mud. "Where would you like to put the camera?" "I'll let you know in a moment," I answered. "Let me check with Freddy."

You must be MERLIN

I've read somewhere, in a novel I think, that "all wisdom is ancient." And when you flatter yourself, thinking you have discovered something fresh, or unique, it has probably existed for centuries, and you are merely catching up to the idea. This is the 21st century. Has there ever been a time so electrified, so scientifically modernized, and so pregnant with instant answers? Interrogatories are short lived these days; log on, read it, move on. That's it. "You want more information, my website is www.piginapunchbowl.com. See you later, bye kids.

I'm an animator, I appreciate science and its pragmatism, but animation is an art, and all art is elusive, ephemeral and capricious. It is an expression of deep and personal feelings, and there is no set rule book to define it. I must tell you of something that happened to me recently. I discovered a great treasure, a secret treasure of knowledge, which came to me in the form of an old manuscript.

In June of 2000, I shared a booth with a group called *American Royal Arts* at the comic convention in San Diego. We were there to sell cel set-ups from the movie *Titan A.E.* and subscriptions to my magazine *ToonTalk*. The Hall itself stretched for two city blocks with vaulted ceilings and blue tinted glass. The patrons of the comic convention were no less spectacular. Most were youthful, and dressed comfortably in jeans and T-shirts, but others, slithered along like priests on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but disguised as their favorite ghouls, fiends, or warlocks. Once inside the great Hall, you had the sensation of being dropped into a large snake pit, the merchants hissed and held high their priceless items with their pale fingers. The morning of the second day was usually busy, I had stepped away from the hubbub and was headed for the men's room, when I felt the pencil suddenly slip from behind my ear and heard it hit the floor. As I stopped to pick it up, there suddenly beside it, appeared two slippers with pointed toes. They were made of satin, a deep turquoise color, embroidered with gold. I rose to see a small man with a long narrow beard, white and cascading to the floor. "You must be Merlin", I remarked. "Yes, are you Don Bluth?" He added, smiling. I nodded. "Would you please autograph this video of *Secret of NIMH*", he asked. "I'd love to." Then from the folds of his robe, he produced a small 8x10 book, and handed it to me. "This is for you", he grinned. "I hope you like it." I placed the video into his fingers. He thanked me and scurried away. I forgot all about the gift, until a few months ago when I accidentally discovered it jammed in a box with some old magazines headed for the landfill. I was suddenly overwhelmed with curiosity. I opened the book and began reading.

"In your hands, you hold a manuscript, given to you by Merlin. Oh, not the real Merlin of course, just an impostor in costume. Actually, I am neither of those entities, my real name is Fiachra (Fee-kra) and I exist far away on a different plane, hidden in the folds of time and space. Forgive me for not being totally honest from our first encounter. What is written on these pages is the main event, not how you came by them."

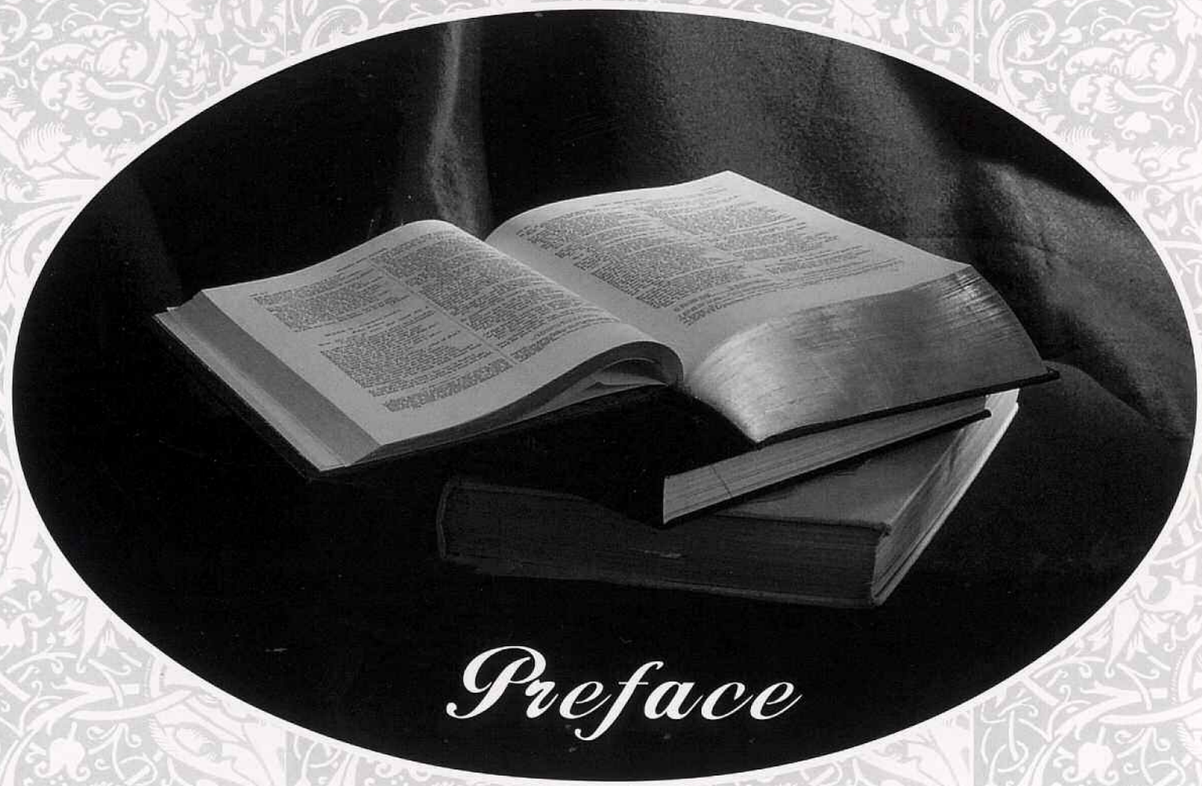
I could feel the pinch of my winkled brow as I strained to recall the details of the meeting. A great curiosity flooded my senses, and I turned the small book over and over, feeling its green leather cover embossed with figures of children or cherubs at play. Then, I flipped through the pages. The print was an elegant calligraphy and an original. "Holy Tomato" I thought. "What is this?"

"In my world, Don, the arts are as important to the perfection of our being as is our air, food, exercise, or thought. Our existence is not defined nor controlled by scientific methods, or even politics. The practice of the arts is needed for unfolding of the soul and its glorification. It leads to freedom, happiness and even joy. The welfare of the soul is everything. By now, the big question you must be asking is why you? Why am I giving the manuscript to you? Well many have received it, but in your case, the answer is simple. You have been skimming the surface of your career for half a century now. I've always marveled that you didn't immerse yourself in it more, explore the twists and turns of its profound secrets. Then one day I realized, "Fiachra" I said to myself, the lad needs a proper tutor. That's when I decided to bring you the manuscript.

In the city of Tuatha, there are many such scripts, covering all the arts. In my province of Tuatha De Dannon, there are a thousand buildings wrought out of red bronze, with windows of green glass and doors that are guarded by dragons made of jade. They contain hundreds of manuscripts, filled with the most intoxicating secrets, all for the advancement of the arts, all for the nourishment of the soul. There are great wizards there, masters of satyr and wit, who with a single sketch, can pull a tear from your eye, or lay you out on the floor convulsing with laughter. With a single sketch, imagine that. And they sit upon velvet cushions in the evenings in the pale moonlight and drink cinnamon tea from painted porcelain and eat maize-cakes baked with honey and fine flour cakes with dates, and give thanks for their camaraderie and encourage each other's learning. All the arts, all the discoveries of the soul are there in profusion in the manuscripts. Your profession Don, animation, yes it has been part of our culture for seven centuries now."

Now a word to the wise. The manuscript in your hands reveals an approach to animation in pragmatic, logical rhetoric. It will almost seem scientific in its approach, but reader beware. The real understanding lies between the lines of the language spoken only by and for the soul. I leave it to your discretion Don, to share these ancient writings with whomever you deem worthy.

The MANUSCRIPT



Preface

There exists an undeniable magic in the words spoken by the ancient animators, I therefore will resist the temptation, to edit them or speculate on their meaning. From time to time, I will, however, give what a particular passage of script taught me. But the original is abundantly resonant. The manuscript is formatted as a dialogue between two masters, Willow, and Mechar, who instruct a student named Nuala. As you explore this manuscript on the animation arts, be cognizant of the fact that your freedom to express yourself in this medium and your success as an entertainer are linked to the intensity of your desire to learn.

Animation is a driving force for entertainment, linked to the realistic by the imaginative. You will need two things to do it well. (1) A knowledge of the craft, which is your language, and (2) A good education, which is your substance.

More important than your ability to draw exactly what you see, is your skill in drawing what you feel and think about what you see. A drawing with a feeling has a soul, all others do not. These delicate small souls are like highly polished mirrors into which an audience looks and sees themselves reflected back.

The Dragon Returns

7 YARDSTICKS OF ANIMATION

IMAGINATION
Finding the pictures in your head

SHAPES
Animation is the changing of shapes

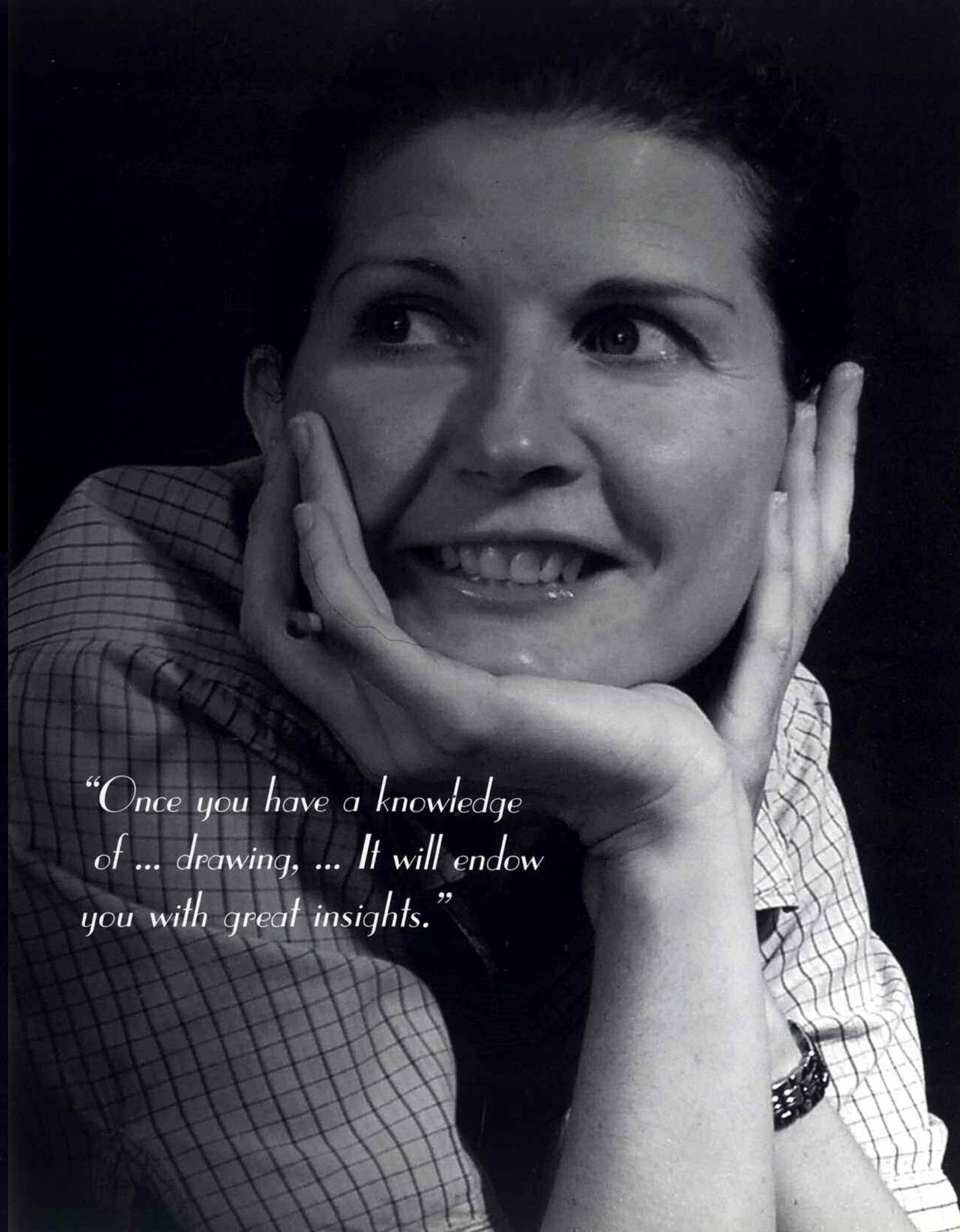
PROPORTIONS
The excitment of comparative sizes

SILHOUETTE
The simplest possible expression

CARICATURE
Pushing elements to the extreme

THIRD DIMENSION
Giving your work depth

STAGING
Selecting your point of view



THE MANUSCRIPT

MECHAR
Hello Nuala. I see you're a student of animation. Good. I'm just guessing, but I'm sure that somewhere swimming around in that youthful head of yours. You have aspirations of fame and riches, Yes?

NUALA
Well, yes... Is that bad?

MECHAR
No, no my dear. It's just that let's not focus on it for now, not yet. I want to work out a very systematic training course for you. Naturally the first and most important thing for an animator is to know how to draw.

NUALA
Really? Drawing isn't where I want to go. I much prefer the digital world. It's more dimensional, and I'm thinking...

MECHAR
Hold that thought. May I introduce you to Willow. He teaches caricature. So, Nuala here likes the digital world. What do you think Willow?

WILLOW
Don't we all, but milk before meat, walk before run. If you would indulge me Nuala, I absolutely recommend a good life drawing class for a beginner. The strength of that foundation will bring understanding to your computer work.

NUALA
Well, okay. If you think it's best.

WILLOW & MECHAR
(together)
We do.

MECHAR
You see my dear, drawing is like a dance. Oh, not a clumsy, mechanical thing, not pushing keys, or summoning up softwares. It's about you Nuala, committing yourself to an idea. As the energy flows down from the brain to the charcoal, and out onto the paper, there is a feeling. It's a tactile thing.

WILLOW
Once you have knowledge of the dance, or drawing, and have mastered it, it will endow you with great insights. This is a marvelous treasure. Oh, you must have it!

NUALA
I've never thought of it like that, but I really don't have a talent for drawing.

MECHAR
Nonsense! Once we train your eye and your heart to see, you'll manage.

WILLOW
Drawings have to be alive. Labored scribbles on the paper are meaningless. When you talk, it is because you have something to say. Right?

MECHAR
Some people talk a lot and say nothing.

WILLOW
Babble, that is mindless babble. When you draw a figure, it should express a strong statement about action and mood, and not merely babble. A drawing is also like music. It has proportions, balance, shape, and personality. It has twists and turns, rhythms, and surprises. All these musical characteristics also apply to the drawing. In both cases, they are inspired by your feelings of what's happening all around you.

NUALA
Well I see the problem right there. What if all I feel is numbness?

MECHAR
Oh that. Everyone goes through that. Just wait it out. Don't open your mouth until you have something to say.

WILLOW
You know Mechar, she has a good point. Imagination plays a big part of all this. Sometimes it just dries up, the muses go away.

MECHAR
Or could it be you just can't hear them singing to you because you've allowed yourself to become fearful, negative, or stressed out. Creativity my dear, is as right as rain. It is always here. It's how we celebrate life. It feels like it shuts off, but it never really does. I think we are like instruments; we get out of tune, but never lose our ability to produce fine music. So, go center yourself. I listen to music, or take a stroll in the park.

WILLOW
I wander if we couldn't deal with the problem in a more practical way. The art of animation is certainly preceded by the science of animation.

MECHAR
You always bring that up.

NUALA
Animation is a science?

MECHAR
Yes and no. My esteemed colleague here has a well-developed left-brain.

NUALA
Oh please be logical. I love logic.

MECHAR
So be it. The ultimate goal of animation is to entertain, to tickle the fancy of the audience; to make them laugh, cry, or reflect on their own lives.

WILLOW
But Mechar, this is Nuala, she's just beginning. Could we keep it simple for now?

NUALA
I'm amenable to that. Assume I know nothing.

MECHAR
Very well. Your skill as an animator will be proportionate to your skill in observation. The following seven yardsticks seem to be a method of procedure. If you could capture all seven in one single drawing, we'd be on the road to success. So let's discuss the seven yardsticks. 1, your imagination. 2, shapes, both positive and negative. 3, proportions. 4, silhouette value. 5, caricature. 6, staging. 7, gesture. It all begins with a pleasant pass time I call "people watching". It's absolutely the key to your success. It can be done in school, at the mall, in the park, at the movies, or just by looking at photographs. I'm going to place a photograph in front of you; you tell me what you see.The photo is of an African woman carrying a huge bundle of sticks on her head. A child holds her hands as she walks a lone, dusty road.

NUALA
Well... I'm amazed at the size of the load she is carrying, and why is no one helping her. Where are the other women?

MECHAR
What do you see in her face?

NUALA
She looks tired, worn out. Can I make stuff up?

MECHAR
Sure, by all means.

NUALA
I think there's trouble at home. She's fighting with her husband or something. She's not walking like a woman anxious to get home. There's no light in her eyes, no smile, and her child looks frightened.

MECHAR
Good! Now tell me what you feel.

NUALA
Oh that's easy. I feel bad for her. She makes me sad. I know she'd like to drop those stupid sticks and run away, but... Oh my word! Just a minute. Wow! How did I miss that? Look there. I think she's pregnant. She is trapped.

MECHAR
Excellent Nuala. Now take this charcoal and draw that. I want to see all those wonderful details in your sketch. Make it simple. Catch the essence of it in as few lines as possible, and no shading. Use only shapes and lines.

NUALA
Aren't you forgetting something? For me to do what you're asking, I'd have to know something about the human anatomy. You might just as well ask me to convey those feelings in Latin.

MECHAR
So drawing is a language then? A language is learnable. It just takes practice. Let's get started.
Mechar goes over the photograph, showing the positive and negative shapes.

WILLOW
I find it useful to isolate the shapes that make up the whole figure. Train your eye to break it all down. It's easy to see the positive shapes of the woman's head and the bundle she carries, but now make your eye see the negative shape of the space that surrounds the positive one.

NUALA
That seems easy enough.

MECHAR
Good. Now, moving on to proportions. How many heads high is she? Are her arms and legs the same length? Of course they're not. How are they different? There is a great variety in the sizes of the woman's body parts. You must ask yourself how they compare in size to each other.

WILLOW
Here in the beginning, this methodology seems labored, but it will become automatic later on, and as effortless as speaking. The focus is on the thoughts, not the words.

MECHAR
Later my dear, you'll study anatomy of the human figure. That is unbelievably fascinating. Of course you are aware of the rigid armature hidden inside of each of our bodies.

WILLOW
He means your skeleton.

MECHAR
Yes, the skeleton! It supports the whole apparatus; how the muscles connect to it, and how through electrical impulses sent by the brain, the muscles contract, causing the skeleton to become mobile, is worthy of study.

WILLOW
Mechar, she wants to be an animator, not a doctor.

MECHAR
I'm just saying... It can't hurt to know the basics of how the body moves.

NUALA
Please continue.

MECHAR
The fourth yardstick is silhouette.

WILLOW
May I?

Mechar folds his arms and leans back.

WILLOW
In the shadow image there are no interior details to read. So, if we were to photograph that shadow images from each of the sixteen points of the compass, you would find that a few of the results defined her character beautifully, while most would be unclear or misleading. Just as a black blob reveals nothing about her actions, or her mood.

NUALA
Are you saying I should shade my drawings in black?

WILLOW
Yes, I suppose I am, but it's just a test to see if you've got the strongest silhouette, if you're on the right track.

MECHAR
Use tracing paper. It's won't hurt the original sketch.

WILLOW
Strong silhouette means clarity.

MECHAR
And this principal is connected to yardstick number five, caricature. Art is interpretive. Always remember that Nuala. It's what you feel and think that is important. If you feel the woman looks tired and frail, exaggerate that. Subtly won't get you that. Make me understand what you feel. Push it, over emphasize it.
This is the essence of caricature.

WILLOW
"Essence" is such a marvelous word, don't you agree? Finding the essence is at the heart of the artistic experience. What is the essence of all living things? We're only guessing. No one can really know for sure, but your guess is as good as mine, or maybe better. Maybe you're version could persuade me.

MECHAR
Excellent Willow, most inspiring. Each living soul differs from every other. Draw the differences, don't draw realism; draw a fantasy based on realism. Using your imagination, interpret what you see. Caricature it!

WILLOW
The animator should never draw or duplicate actions or things as they actually happen.

MECHAR
Create a caricature of life and action; create dream fantasies and imagination fantasies.
That's entertainment!

WILLOW
Exactly. Bravo!

The two mentors sit back in their chairs pondering the profundity of their remarks.

WILLOW
I think entertainment is such an unfortunate word.

MECHAR
Oh no, don't start this again!

WILLOW
Well it is. "Entertainment" hear that?! It sounds like you're merely amusing yourself... Killing time, waiting for the next bus.

MECHAR
How many times do I have to tell you? Entertainment can be edifying. It stimulates the brain, provokes thought, gets the wheels turning, gets rid of stress, makes you laugh. It's good for people, get it? It's good!

WILLOW
I know, I know... I think it's the word itself... It's so...so. Off the mark, so out of tune. It has no anamonopia.

NUALA
Entertainment...it does have a lovely sound.

MECHAR
There, you see.

WILLOW
Sound? You may be on to something...how about...(he thinks) Motto crescendo! Yes, MOTTO CRESCENDO!!!

MECHAR
Stop it. How you do trip on a single word.

WILLOW
Well, I think a word should sound like what it describes.

MECHAR
Perfect analogy. I think a drawing should look like what it describes. Now, could we discuss the sixth yardstick?

WILLOW
That's a good idea.

MECHAR
Well I'm glad you agree

turning to Nuala

WILLOW & MECHAR
The sixth yardstick is the third dimension.

MECHAR
Although the paper is flat, the figure you draw needs dimensionality, as if...

WILLOW
...you were viewing an exquisite sculpture from the best seat in the house.

MECHAR
In your mind, see the lines and shapes wrapping around to the other side.

WILLOW
Myself, I play a little game as I draw. The paper is not flat at all, but a square block of white. Then I carve the drawings mellifluously.

MECHAR
Enough said. On to number seven, staging, this is the "biggie" Directors, Choreographers, Cameramen, Advertisers, Marketers, Politicians....

WILLOW
Philosophers, scientists and theologists all wrestle with staging. The question is always the arrangement of all the ideas, or elements in the frame. To sell an idea you will not be around to explain your drawing so...

MECHAR
...It must speak for itself with a clear focus.

WILLOW
By?

MECHAR
By pulling your eye to the exact moment or spot where you want your audience to look. It's all theatre.

WILLOW
Speaking of theatre. Do you know how a play is different from a movie?

NUALA
Of course. A play is live on stage, a movie is on film.

WILLOW
Yes, but you see the entire play, scene by scene, from the same seat. In a movie, on the other hand, the camera gets up and keeps moving about. Changing its Point Of View, changing its staging.

MECHAR
And your point my dear.

WILLOW
My point is, of necessity. Plays are about words. Get it? Words. It's a staging of words.

NUALA
And a movie is...?

WILLOW
...Is About action and mood. The camera goes in for the close up. It captures the thoughts of the actors, those subtle little nuances of the eyes, the eyebrows, the nose and the mouth. They're both theatre, but really chalk and cheese.

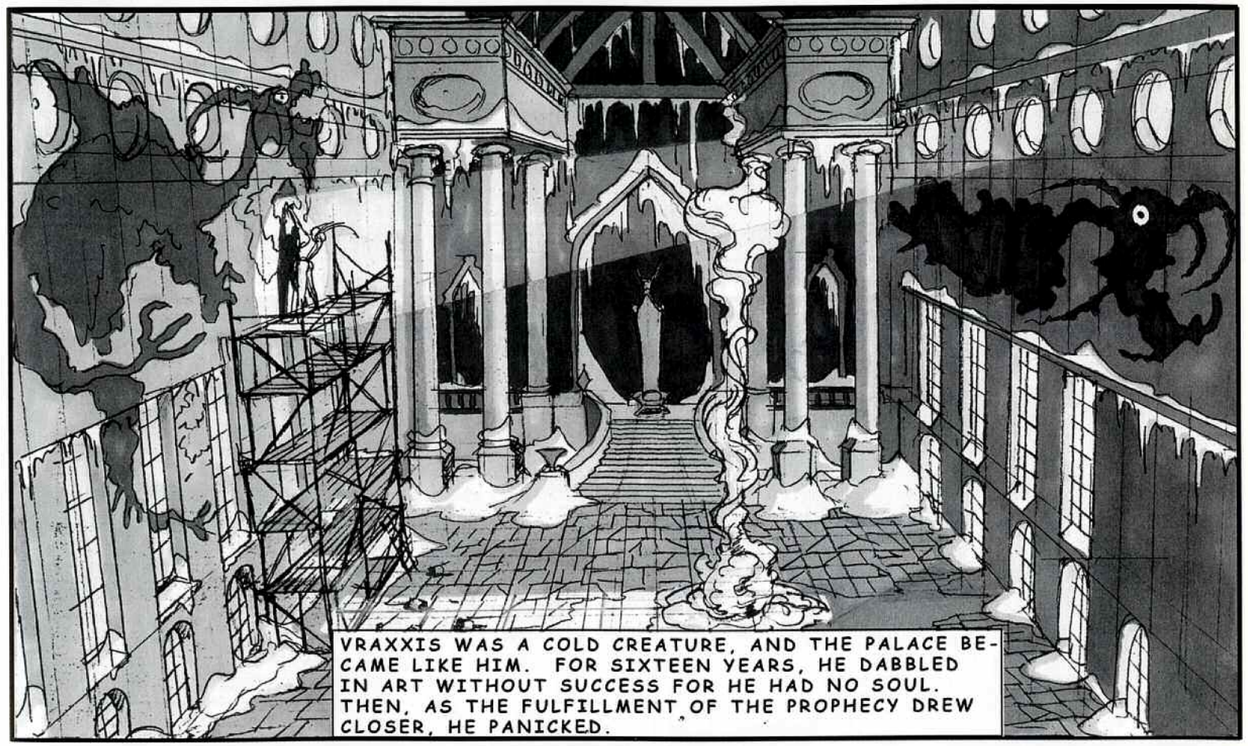
MECHAR
That's an excellent observation. I like it Willow.

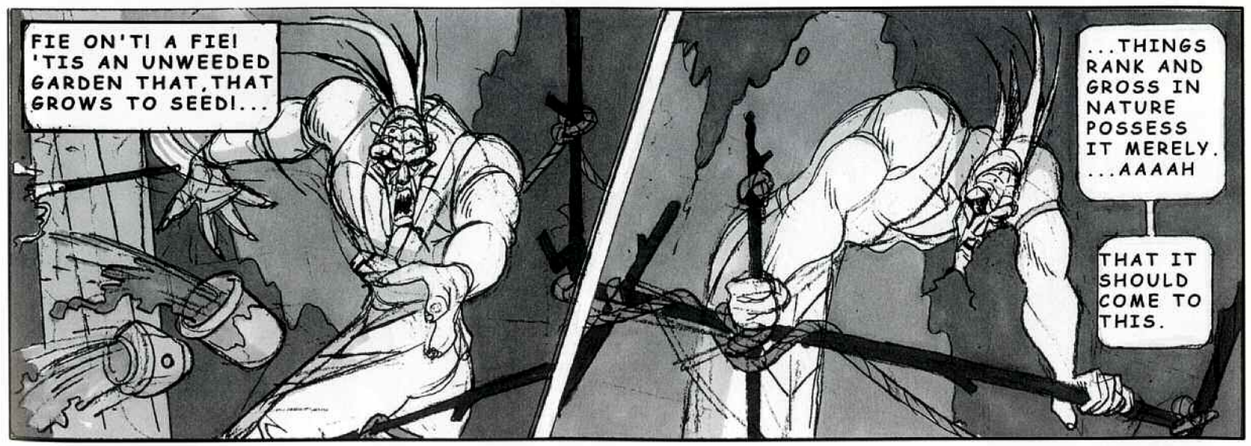
NUALA
But a single drawing is locked onto the paper. The camera cannot move around it.

WILLOW
Yes, but you could decide where to place the camera before you make the drawing, then choose a position that will guarantee the capture of the thoughts of the figure.

MECHAR
He's right as rain, but let's pause. You have plenty to think about, and digest. I want you to become an avid people watcher. Sharpen your wits. Analyze what you see. Explore your feelings. Create a fantasy drawing of the people you see. Caricature your ideas. Maybe you could carry a small sketchpad around and practice these techniques during the day, and then your drawing technique will improve immensely. When you were a child learning to speak, you didn't always pronounce the words correctly; you made mistakes. So it will be with the language of drawing.

CONTINUED


VRAXXIS WAS A COLD CREATURE, AND THE PALACE BECAME LIKE HIM. FOR SIXTEEN YEARS, HE DABBLED IN ART WITHOUT SUCCESS FOR HE HAD NO SOUL. THEN, AS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY DREW CLOSER, HE PANICKED.


FIE ON'T! A FIE! 'TIS AN UNWEEDED GARDEN THAT, THAT GROWS TO SEED!...
...THINGS RANK AND GROSS IN NATURE POSSESS IT MERELY. ...AAAAH
THAT IT SHOULD COME TO THIS.

SIXTEEN YEARS? NOT YET SO MUCH NOT SIXTEEN! SO EXCELLENT A KING, TO THIS DISPOSITION WAS NEVER BORN... DAMABLE HEIR, I FEEL HIS BREATH ON MY BACK.

VRAXXIS

A SOOTHING VOICE INTERRUPTS THE KINGS MONOLOGUE.

THE KING WHIRLS TO FACE THE SOUND...THEN,

SORRY IF I FRIGHTENED YOU! WAS THAT VERSE OF YOUR OWN CREATION?

WHY YES! IT'S STILL ONLY A WORK IN PROGRESS, BUT... TELL ME... DO YOU LIKE IT?

THE APPARITION FLOATS IN THE AIR TANTALIZING VRAXXIS

IT COULD BE A BIT MORE UPBEAT, BUT, IT'S STILL QUITE GOOD.

AH! I CAN SEE YOU...YOU ARE A WOMAN OF TASTE. I BELIEVE WE HAVE QUITE A LOT IN COMMON.

BUT WE COULD HAVE SO MUCH MORE.

HOW IS THAT?

I'M SPEAKING OF THE HEIR TO THE THRONE.

SHOW ME YOUR FACE

...AT LEAST TELL ME YOUR NAME. I NEED TO KNOW YOUR...

WHAT YOU NEED IS PROFESSIONAL HELP! YOU NEED...

A MERCENARY!

A MERCENARY?

EXACTLY!

WIZARDS *of the* BIZ

Walt Disney

THE VISIONARY

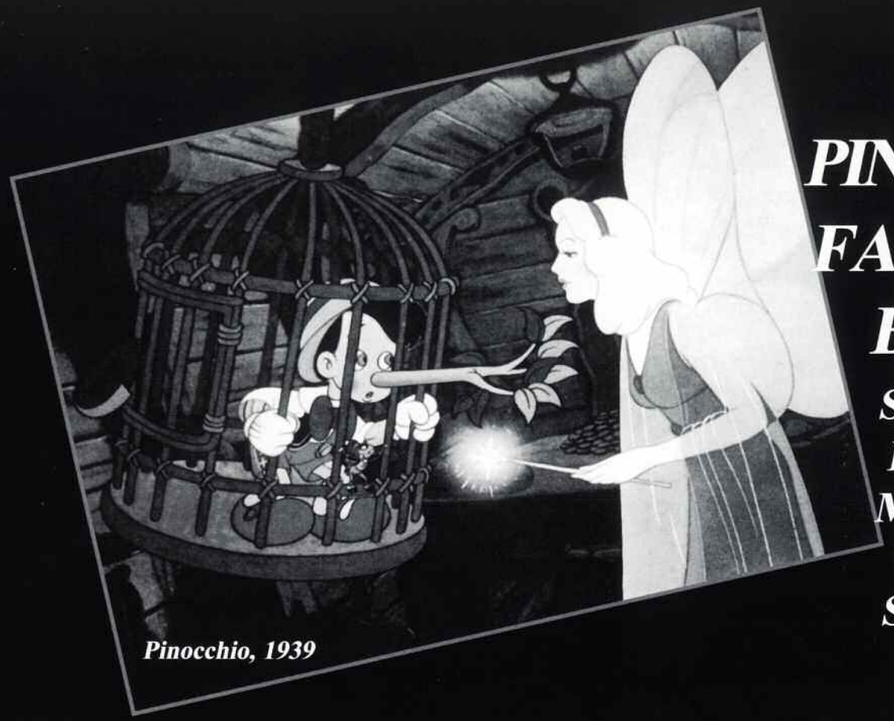
"The first duty of the cartoon is not to picture or duplicate real action of things as they actually happen, but to give a caricature of life and action, to picture on the screen things that have run through the imagination of the audience, to bring to life dream fantasies ... that we have all thought of during our lives or have had pictured to us in various forms during our lives. Also, to caricuture things of life as it is today ...." Walt Disney

SNOW WHITE WALT'S FOLLEY

Of course you must agree that the grand Pooh-Bah of anima tion wizardry would be Walt himself. It is safe to say that no man had a greater influence on the art than Walt. His contributions give vision and form to all who would be inspired to follow after him. And yet, consider this, each animated piece, from *Steamboat Willy to the Silly Symphonies,* to the features, was a Herculean effort, not merely to court the muses in search of flights of whimsical fancy in a heretofore, unexplored medium, but at the same time, resisted the temptation to invite the comforting embrace of corporate backing. All those who swim in Hollywood's aqua tinted waters know of the "golden rule." It means simply, he with the gold rules, and that would surely include the control of artistic content. The nature of business is to reduce risk while the nature of art is to embrace it. The very word "show business" is wonderfully paradoxical. If only the two polarized mediums could co-existed in mutual understanding of each other's needs. It could happen, but such an alliance is usually rare. Walt seemed to sense this and guarded his studio's autonomy fiercely. Anxious investment capitol was there, the suits came calling to his door but he chose the more conventional mode of financing, the bank. Walt was a pioneer. While he explored the frontiers of the medium, his competitors wore holes in their carpets pacing, trying to think of ways to keep up.

In the midst of a raft of colorless, silent cartoons, Walt opens *Steamboat Willy* at the Colon Theatre in New York, billed as "the first animated cartoon with sound." It gets rave reviews, the year, 1928. The following year, he initiates a new series of cartoons called *Silly Symphonies.*

In 1930, *Pluto* barks into existence in a *Mickey Mouse* cartoon called *The Chain Gang.* Ah, but in 1931, Walt



Pinocchio, 1939

PINOCCHIO FANTASIA BAMBI

STRESS THE FINANCIAL MOORINGS OF THE STUDIO.

takes some time off to have a nervous breakdown caused by pushing himself and his animation to the limits. But under a doctor's strict supervision and daily exercise, he is soon back on the job. Unbelievably, the next year, in 1932, he produces still another first. *Flowers and Trees* appears at the Gramous Chinese Theatre. It is the first exclusive use of the three-color Technicolor process. There is no stopping him. But hang on, the best is yet to come. Disney establishes an art school to elevate the animators drawing skills. He has an idea but waits until 1935 to publicly announce the studio's plans to animate the first feature length cartoon. This is a really big first, I guess a little like the new kid in the trapeze set trying the triple somersault, one and a half twist, with no net. Tinseltown's startled gasp on hearing the news became polite snickers at all the parties, then finally, the film industry blurted right out loud, *Snow White* is Disney's folly. It's sure to flop and bankrupt him. Walt held his ground. He ignores the priests of doomsday, and borrows $500,000 from Bank of America. His estimate of a half million dollars is low. Well, having to return to the bank for additional money is always a producers nightmare, but that's exactly what Walt had to do. Courageously, he returns to the bank to enlist the help from a scowling, skeptical board of directors. He screens the unfinished Snow White, hoping to win their confidence. As the lights went up, there was silence. When the president speaks, it is low and confident. "Gentleman," he begins. "Fifty years from now, no one will remember any of the names of the men in this room, but I believe everyone will know the name Walt Disney. My vote is yes."

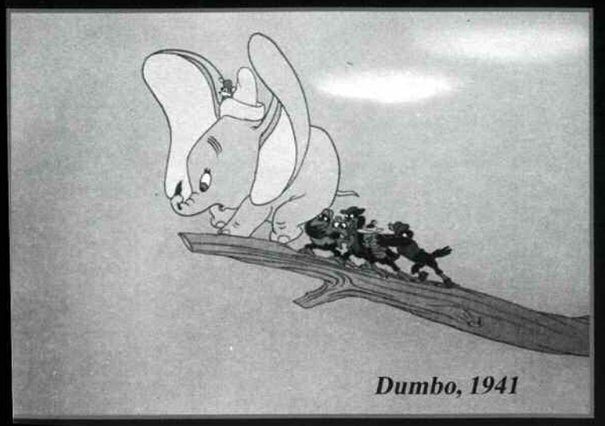
It was a Christmas release, December 21, 1937. *Snow White* premiered at the Carthay Circle in Hollywood. The turnout of stars for the occasion rivaled the star count in the night sky over Texas. They all came to see Walt's "Folly", or maybe they just showed up out of curiosity. But what happened that night, no one could have guessed. As the scenes illuminated the screen, clenched folded arms relaxed, and light applause tumbled here and there about the room. Smiles gave way to laughter, doubt to belief, cynicism to innocence. The art of animation was casting its spell over the crowd, and it acknowledged for the first time, the masterpiece before them. If there had ever been a "folly", it was never Walt's, but their own. Their disbelief muted numerous times during the screening. They rose to their feet with vociferous accolades of deafening approbation. In New York, it ran for three weeks at Radio City Music Hall, *Snow White* grossed eight million dollars and won an Academy Award. Within six months, the studio paid off all the bank loans and Walt and Roy put a deposit down on a site of land in Burbank, California for a new studio building.

Fantasia, 1940

Bambi, 1942

Snow White is a major triumph, both artistically and financially. To date it has grossed more than $600,000,000! Not too shabby for a "folly" I'd say. But as *Snow White* proved to be a winning ticket, the next three features would apply stress to the financial moorings of the studio. What goes up must come down. The experience of living is a concert of opposites. With every breath you take, things can change.

In 1935, work began on *Pinocchio* and two more features were chosen, *Fantasia*, and *Bambi*. *Pinocchio* lost money, *Fantasia* did even worse, and so did Bambi. The studio, in order to dig itself out of a money pit, was forced to offer public stock, something Walt and Roy did not want to do, nevertheless, there it was. Perhaps it was kismet.



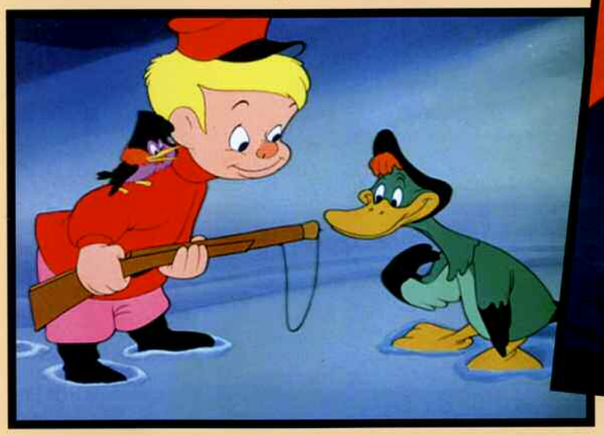
Dumbo, 1941

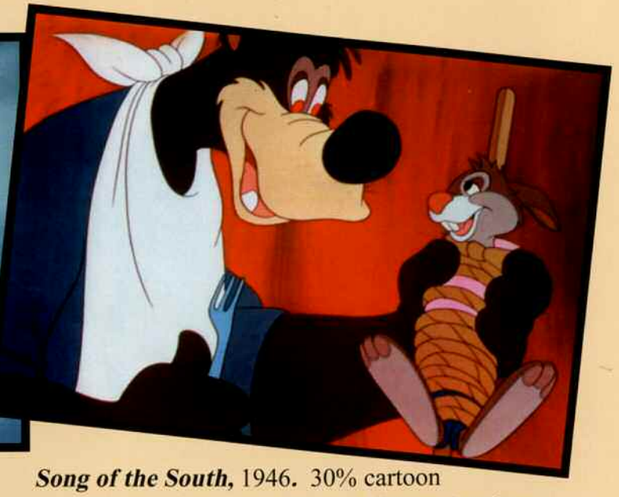
"Gentlemen,...fifty years from now, no one will remember any of the names of the men in this room, but I believe everyone will know the name Walt Disney."

From my own point of view as a young man, all four films mentioned above just "happened", effortlessly happened. They were beautiful. I knew nothing of the agony of carving them into existence, nothing of the persistence and focus it takes to get it right. The films simply appeared at my local theatre in a blaze of color and music. Ultimately, they were to shape the course of my own destiny. They filled my soul with boundless ecstasy, and helped to fuel a career in animation. Later, years later, I would see the bigger picture, the hundreds of men and women behind the scenes who battled with alcoholism, depression and despair, some even taking their own lives, Men and women who rose to the top for moments, even if brief, to celebrate their lives, and leave us a trail of beauty. To all of them, I am much indebted, and especially to you, their leader, Walt Disney.

Saludos Amigos, 1943, and ***Three Caballeros*** 1945 are a result of the South American trip.

Three Caballeros, 1945. Both films are successful in North and South America.





Make Mine Music, 1946. This film makes a small profit but Walt is not pleased with it.

Song of the South, 1946. 30% cartoon and 70% live action, the Motion Picture Academy names *Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah* best song of the year.

Fun and Fancy Free, 1947 features ***Mickey and the BeanStalk.*** This is the last time Walt voices the part of Mickey.

Melody Time, 1948. A package picture consisting of small stories, most remembered are *Pecos Bill* and *Little Toot.*

The adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad, 1949.

Cinderella, 1950.

Walt embraces the feature length story once again in this classic fairy tale. This is the first hit for the Disney studios since *Snow White.*

Alice in Wonderland, 1951. A delightful artistic triumph, but disappointing box office returns.

Peter Pan, 1953. Classic Disney - The story turned out to be Tinkerbelle, and her Pixie Dust. This one made money.

Lady and the Tramp, 1955. Two firsts: The story was original and the screen got wider.

Sleeping Beauty, 1959. This film was a benchmark in artistic design. It cost 6 million dollars, but lost money. It is considered by some to be an animation masterpiece.

101 Dalmations, 1961. To cut expenses, the xerox process duplicated the drawings on cels. Inkers became obsolete.

Sword in the Stone, 1963.

Mary Poppins, 1964. Nominated for 13 academy awards. Julie Andrews wins for best actress.

The Jungle Book, 1967. Walt died before the film was finished. It became a financial triumph.

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This edition of ToonTalk magazine is issue 7. It is also labeled Vol. II No. 3. (Which means that it is the third magazine of the second year of publication) It has been a pleasure for us to produce ToonTalk. We hope your enthusiasm continues. The next six issues (7 thru 12) will be formatted in a slightly different way, leaning towards more instructional material. We welcome your suggestions. Regards, Dave...

Publisher Don Bluth

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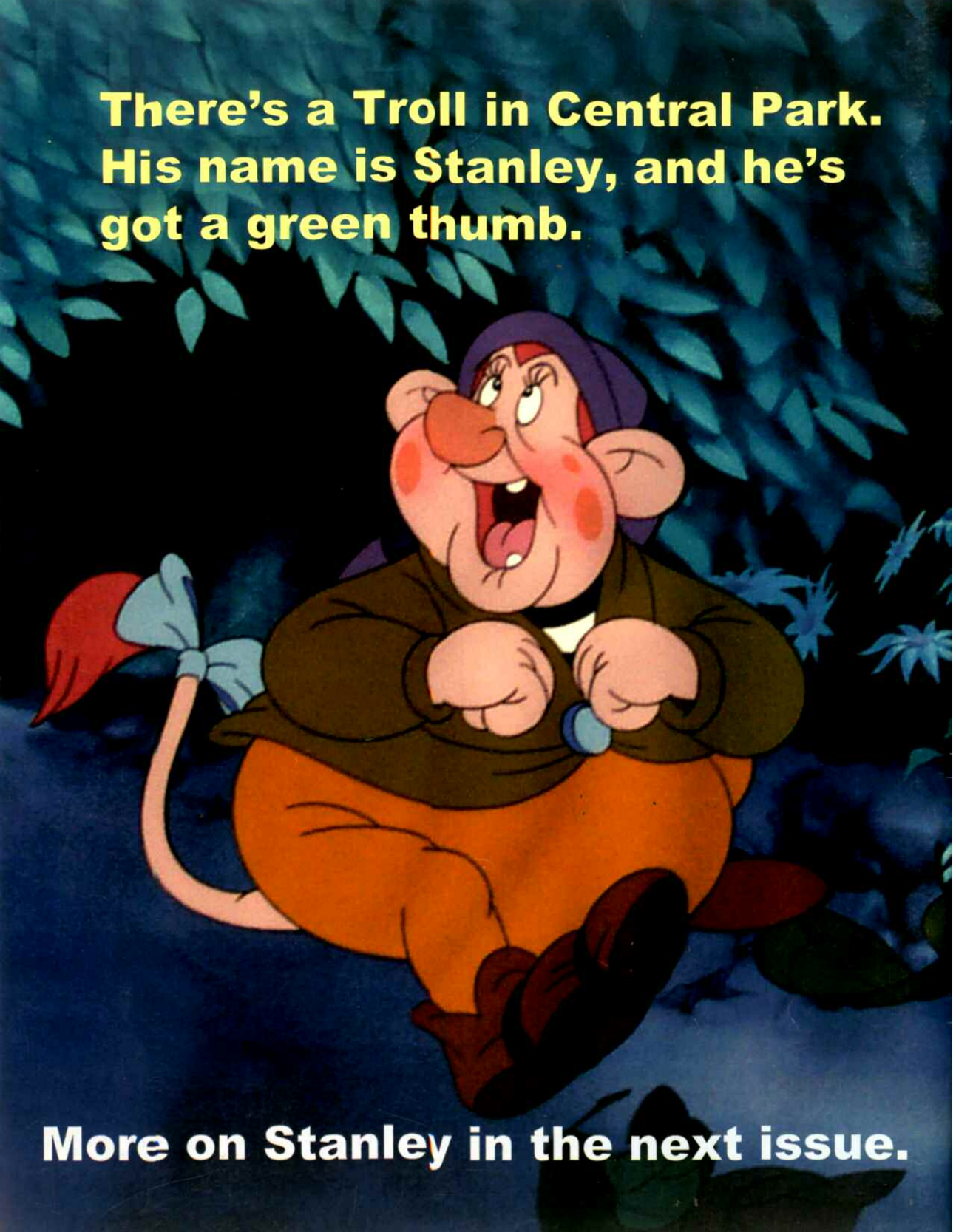
There's a Troll in Central Park.
His name is Stanley, and he's
got a green thumb.
More on Stanley in the next issue.